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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
UNITED NATIONS

OBSERVANCE OF PAST ANNIVERSARIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the Secretariat

1. For the convenience of the members of the Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, the Secretariat has prepared the present note on the observance of past anniversaries of the United Nations.

A. Tenth anniversary 1/

2. At its ninth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 889 A (IX) of 17 December 1954, calling upon specialized agencies and Member States to give all appropriate support to programmes in their countries to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations. It also adopted resolution 889 B (IX) of the same date, which provided for a seven-day commemoration, including four days of unofficial meetings, to be held in San Francisco from 20 to 26 June 1955, and set up a Committee to work with the Secretary-General in arranging, in consultation with the civic authorities of the City of San Francisco, the programme for the commemoration. The programme, suggested by the City of San Francisco, involved meetings and cultural events during the period 13 to 26 June and others in which Members of the General Assembly participated from 23 to 26 June at the Opera House (later changed to 20 to 26 June).

3. The meetings were opened on 20 June 1955 by President Eisenhower, the Mayor of San Francisco, the Governor of California, the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly. Thirty-eight Foreign Ministers attended.

B. Twentieth anniversary

4. The General Assembly, at its seventeenth session, in its resolution 1844 (XVII) of 19 December 1962, established a Preparatory Committee on the International Cooperation Year. The Year was designated by the Assembly at its eighteenth session, in resolution 1907 (XVIII), to be held in 1965.

5. The suggestions of the Preparatory Committee to the General Assembly at its eighteenth session included a recommendation for acceptance of an invitation from the Mayor of San Francisco to hold a commemorative session of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1965 on the condition that no financial obligations would accrue to the United Nations.

6. A commemorative meeting was held in San Francisco on 25 and 26 June 1965, at the invitation of the City. The meetings were addressed by the Mayor of the City, the Governor of California, the President of the General Assembly, the President of the United States of America and the Secretary-General, as well as by some 24 permanent representatives and other Secretariat members. Expenses were met by the City.

C. Twenty-fifth anniversary 2/

7. The General Assembly established a Preparatory Committee for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations at its twenty-third session. At its twenty-fourth session the Assembly adopted resolution 2499 A (XXIV), of 31 October 1969, in which it, inter alia, established a Committee for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary, composed of 25 members, to draw up and coordinate plans for the anniversary and organize suitable activities, etc. The Assembly also decided that a commemorative session of the General Assembly would be held, culminating on 24 October 1970 with the signature and/or adoption of a final document or documents. It invited Member States and specialized agencies to take note of the observance. Further, it appealed to Member States to ratify multilateral instruments that had been adopted, endorsed or supported by the United Nations. It also decided, in its resolution 2499 B (XXIV), that medals be struck to commemorate the anniversary with the emblem "Peace, justice and progress" and that stamps with the same theme be issued.

8. The Committee for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary reported to the Assembly on 15 September 1970, recommending that a commemorative session be held from 14 to 24 October (the original proposal had been for 19 to 24 October). The President of the Assembly made a short statement at the opening. Many representatives and heads of State spoke during the 10-day period. The Secretary-General, the President, and the regional group chairmen spoke on the last day. Several documents were adopted on a number of subjects, the main ones being General Assembly resolutions 2625 (XXV), 2626 (XXV) and 2627 (XXV) of 24 October 1970 entitled, respectively, "Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations", "International

Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade" and "Declaration on the Occasion of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the United Nations".

D. Thirtieth anniversary

9. The General Assembly did not adopt a resolution to commemorate the event. A ceremony took place in the General Assembly Hall on 26 June 1975 attended by delegations, Secretariat members and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Addresses were made by the Secretary-General, the chairmen of the regional groups, a representative of the host country and the Chairman of the Staff Committee. The United Nations Singers opened and concluded the programme.

10. In San Francisco, the occasion was observed by the dedication of a United Nations Plaza and Fountain and by the opening of the sale of a United Nations thirtieth anniversary commemorative stamp.

E. Fortieth anniversary

11. The Preparatory Committee for the Fortieth Anniversary, which was established by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session by decision 38/455 of 20 December 1983, recommended that the anniversary's theme be "United Nations for a Better World", that the occasion be marked by a commemorative session which would conclude on 24 October 1985, coinciding with the proclamation of the International Year of Peace (1986), and that the year 1985 be observed as the Year of the United Nations. In accepting the recommendations, the General Assembly expressed the hope that heads of State or Government would participate in the commemorative session and requested that the Committee draw up a final document for signature and/or adoption during the session. One hundred twenty heads of State or Government attended.

12. The General Assembly also invited Member States to consider establishing national committees to focus attention on the contributions made by the Organization in the course of its first four decades. Among the activities organized throughout the world were round tables, seminars, film screenings, exhibits, street dedications, stamp and medal issues, etc. In San Francisco, the United Nations Association of San Francisco, the World Affairs Council of Northern California and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce sponsored a two-day conference on 24 and 25 June 1985, which was addressed by the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly, among others.

13. The information activities organized by the United Nations included an international poster competition, publication of the leaflet UN for a Better World, which highlighted significant events in the Organization's 40-year history, and the book United Nations at Forty and production of the film "Why" as well as a 30-minute compilation of historical material and a 2-hour special television programme.

14. In conjunction with the fortieth anniversary, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research organized a meeting of Presidents of the General Assembly which was held in New York from 6 to 10 June 1985; and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations used World Food Day to draw attention to the anniversary at the international, regional, national and local levels.

Notes

1/ See Yearbook of the United Nations, United Nations publication (Sales No. 1956.I.20), chap. IX, pp. 81 and 82.

2/ See Yearbook of the United Nations, United Nations publication (Sales No. E.72.I.1), chap. VII, pp. 107-118.